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## ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU

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As part of the discussion on "Influence of City Environment on National Life and Vigor" there has been assigned to me as subject, "The Relation of the Federal Government to Race Improvement, With Special Reference to the Establishment of a Children's Bureau." This assignment was made because, at the request of the National Child Labor Committee, I had the privilege of introducing in the Sixtieth Congress a bill to provide for a children's bureau under the Department of the Interior.

The bill provided that the proposed bureau should investigate and report upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child-life, and should especially investigate the following questions: Infant mortality; the birth rate; physical degeneracy; orphanage; juvenile delinquency and juvenile courts; desertion and illegitimacy; dangerous occupations; accidents and diseases of the children of the working classes; employment; legislation affecting children in the several states and territories, and such other facts as have a bearing upon the health, efficiency, character and training of children. In effect, the object of the bill was to provide a central bureau of publicity and investigation in regard to matters peculiarly affecting child-life.

The extent to which the Federal Government can legislate in regard to the welfare of children is limited. Except as to the District of Columbia and the territories it has nothing to do with legislation directly affecting infant mortality, the birth rate, physical degeneracy, orphanage, juvenile delinquency and juvenile courts, and desertion and illegitimacy. There is a dispute as to its constitutional power to legislate in regard to child labor. The future may see a gradual and great extension of federal power. Such I believe to be inevitable as well as desirable. The country, though large, is by means of communication so closely knit together that in many

things state lines are a hindrance and state legislation an obstacle to achieving results.

The processes of time will bring about changes, so that those things that for effective results will require federal legislation will receive it. Plenty of subjects will still be left to engage the attention of state legislators. Under that extension of federal power much social legislation will take place. Perhaps some of it will deal with the question of child labor. But that may seem too far distant for present-day consideration. If, then, the Federal Government is not now to legislate directly on child labor there is one thing that it directly can do by legislation, and that is to establish a children's bureau as a bureau of information on and investigation of the subject of child labor as well as other subjects relating to the health and welfare of children.

At the last census 44.3 per cent. of our population were under twenty years of age; of those, 1,916,892 were under one year of age, 7,253,736 were from one to four years of age, 8,874,123 were from five to nine years of age, 8,080,234 were from ten to fourteen years of age. Of these children there were in cities with over 25,000 inhabitants 2,054,790 under five years of age, 1,989,341 from five to nine years of age, 1,772,883 from ten to fourteen years of age, a total of children in such cities under fifteen years of age of 5,817,014. The effect of city life on children is, therefore, one of the largest items to be considered in the discussion of the influence of city environment on national life and vigor. The city population is, as all know, steadily increasing in proportion to the country population.

This children's bureau would directly deal with information in regard to the welfare of children in cities. Most of its objects relate more to city than to country conditions. It recognizes the fact, so often stated, that the problem of the city is the problem of the future. Vast as the city problems are, they should enthuse and not discourage us. The greatness of the need of service in solving them measures the greatness of the service in the solution of them. The difficulties of the problem call upon all that is ablest and nerviest in man. I have never forgotten the remark that I once heard Phillips Brooks make, namely: That we should not complain that it was hard to do right, because the harder it was to do right the more worth while it was. That principle applies

to many things. As a Representative in Congress from the City of New York I have taken an additional pride in this bill for a children's bureau because it will have so much to do with the solution of city problems. What are some of these city problems with which it will deal?

Infant mortality is one of them. Frequently we forget the degree of it. According to the report of the Census Bureau on Mortality Statistics for 1906, there were in the registration area, which now covers about half of our population, mainly cities, 212,138 deaths of children under fifteen years of age, but of these 133,105 were of infants under one year of age. They formed twenty per cent. of the deaths of those of all ages. They were in average three times as many as those of children under five years and forty times as many as those of children from five to fourteen years of age. They were greater in cities than in the country at large. Such detailed investigations as have been made of infant mortality show that it is in considerable degree related to housing conditions in cities. In Berlin some time ago an investigation was made of 2711 infantile deaths. Of them 1792 occurred in one-room apartments, 754 in two-room apartments, 122 in three-room apartments, and 43 only in four-room apartments and over. The results of the Berlin investigation as to infantile mortality are confirmed by investigations as to general mortality made in Glasgow, Budapest and Washington.

Another subject that is enumerated in the bill and one that is synonymous with the topic of this volume is that of physical degeneracy. The report recently made by the Committee on the Physical Welfare of School Children in New York City says, as to the result of its investigation of the home conditions of 1400 school children, that "physical defects must be expected in children where three out of four families have four rooms or less for cooking, working, washing, sleeping"; that "if New York school children are typical of school children in the United States there must be in the schools of this country 12,000,000 children having physical defects more or less serious that should receive attention from parents and family physicians." In Washington a somewhat similar investigation was made by the Homes Commission appointed by President Roosevelt. The commission reported that out of the 43,005 pupils investigated 28.2 per cent. of the colored children had de-

fects, that 38.9 of the white children had defects, and that there were 20 per cent. of all the children "whose physical condition should be a matter of grave concern to the parents."

Those who know assert that one-quarter of all the blind children in all the blind schools of this country are unnecessarily blind. Any bureau that can give publicity to this fact, the reasons for it and the way to avoid such an unnecessary injury is worth while.

Dangerous occupations is another subject enumerated in this bill. Mr. Edwin W. DeLeon, who is first vice-president of the Casualty Company of America, and has for that reason had peculiar means of information on this subject, has repeatedly called attention to the need of publicity in regard to it, believing, as he does, that the strong public sentiment that publicity will create will tend to ameliorate these conditions. Only a few states, as I am informed, give the ages of those who are injured in accidents. Michigan is one of these states, and its last report shows that accidents to children sixteen years of age and under who came under the occupations reported were 1100 per cent. more in proportion than occurred to children and grown people over that age. In Indiana the percentage of accidents to them was 400 per cent. greater in proportion. Should these facts be centrally and, therefore, easily obtainable, then the publicity that would ensue would lead to legislation by the states that would end the horror.

There is in the bill the general subject of the employment of children. It is admitted by all that the labor of children in cities is very different in its physical effects from the labor of children in the country. On the subject generally, President Roosevelt's Homes Commission, which I referred to before, concluded that "the average boy at the age of fourteen possesses about one-half the muscular strength of an average adult between thirty-five and forty years of age. As a consequence of imperfect muscular development it is not surprising that a large percentage of young persons engaged in workshops, factories or, even, at the writing desk or merchant's counter develop lateral curvature of the spine and other muscular deformities, not to mention general weakness and predisposition to rickets, tuberculosis and other pulmonary diseases." An investigation in England for the purpose of making comparison between boys belonging to the non-laboring class and boys belonging to the artisan class showed that at thirteen years of

age those of the non-laboring class averaged 2.66 of an inch greater height than those in the artisan class, and that this difference had increased at sixteen years of age to a difference of 3.47 of an inch. In weight the difference in favor of the non-laboring class of boys advanced from 10.33 pounds at thirteen years to 19.64 pounds at sixteen. Chest girth measurements showed similar differences in favor of the boys of the non-laboring class.

On the general subject of child labor it is unnecessary for me to enter, as its evils have been recognized almost everywhere. It is not sufficient, however, that those evils should have publicity now. Nor should the burden of keeping public opinion alive be placed upon a voluntary association. Publicity will keep public opinion alive and that publicity should come from government sources.

A few objections have been made to the bill. It is claimed by some that other departments do or can do the work, and allusion is made to the Bureau of Education, the Bureau of Labor and the Census Bureau. But the heads of all those bureaus favor the bill and allege that it will not mean a duplication of work and that the ends sought are eminently desirable.

In Congress it has been argued in the past that the Census Office can make investigations such as this bureau might see fit to make, but the distinction has been made clear, namely, that the Census Bureau can only do quantitative work and that intensive work must be done by investigators trained in that line, which requires somewhat different training from that which fits census investigators for their work. With the heads of the other divisions of the government to which this work might be allotted favoring this separate bureau, the bill ultimately should become a law. It was introduced late in the last Congress and was reported in both the Senate and House. It has already been introduced in the Sixty-first Congress. It should receive consideration early at the regular session commencing next December. I believe that the bureau, just because it will publish and investigate matters as to which legislation must be other than federal, will be of enormous assistance to localities and states. Rapidly growing communities, moreover, that wish so far as they can to diminish the evils that are incident to city life would be able to act forehandedly with the information that this bureau could supply. A large corpora-

tion developing a community of its own and wishing to plan it on most approved lines could here get information that to get now it would have to employ an expert to make many extended investigations. Chances to compare notes, still better, the opportunity of seeing the notes compared, are a great aid to progress. Publicity in matters governmental is as effective as sunshine in behalf of health. It is curious how quickly the public responds in behalf of the correction of evils that are made public, nor does it matter if they relate to things which are somewhat remote in their effect. The lawyer's case is half won by his ability to state it clearly. In legislative bodies the most effective oratory is frequently that which is a mere statement of facts. This bureau will do much of the work that can be done by clear presentation of facts.

Progress is slow in some ways. It is often difficult to raise enthusiasm as to a matter for which immediate great results cannot be claimed. How immediate and how great the results from a federal children's bureau would be I cannot say. Fortunately, however, it touches the sympathies of so many people that the demand for it is an easy one to make. Finally, while it may not be simple to say what the bureau would accomplish directly, we can say that what it would accomplish indirectly the imagination cannot encompass.